

REPORT TO THE TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
2006 REGULAR SESSION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES'
DIVISION OF STATE PARKS TO ESTABLISH A SOUTH KONA – KA'Ū
COASTAL CONSERVATION TASK FORCE



PREPARED BY:

THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

IN RESPONSE TO

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 5, HOUSE DRAFT 1, SENATE DRAFT 1
2005 REGULAR SESSION

NOVEMBER 2005

Introduction

House Concurrent Resolution No. 5, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1 (HCR 5), adopted by the 2005 Legislature, authorizes the Division of State Parks (State Parks) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to establish a South Kona – Ka’ū Coastal Conservation Task Force. The objectives for the community-based Task Force are to: 1) Identify coastal lands and near shore marine areas that have environmental, cultural and recreational values in need of protection, 2) Review and analyze any impacts to those areas, 3) Identify mechanisms and sources of funding for the protection and management of such resources, 4) Propose future uses and limitations for those areas identified that allow for minimal man-made structures, and 5) Manage activities that may degrade or deplete resources, and avoids the hazards from potential volcanic activities and lava flows. Once such areas are identified, the Task Force is to propose measures for the protection of marine animals, such as monk seals and green sea and hawksbill turtles, and their habitats and finally, to seek funding through grants and contributions, to support and implement the recommendations made by the Task Force.

Project Area

The South Kona – Ka’ū area is bounded by Honomalino at its northern boundary and the Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park as its southwest boundary, and includes the Ka’ū Desert, and Kahuku Ranch with Ka Lae Lighthouse, Boat Landing and Park, Nā’ālehu, Honu’apo, Wood Valley, Punalu’u and Pāhala. For many who live in or have an interest in the area, a distinction is made between makai and mauka issues, with issues of the coastal resources representing the makai interests and the mauka interests having historic and cultural issues.

Some of the areas with significant resources that will be considered by the Task Force are:

Wood Valley: Noted for its five native land ecosystems that provides habitat for some native forest birds and the Nēnē. These native land ecosystems are mixed mesophytic forest, koa forest, ’ōhi’a tree fern forest, koa forest with Dryopteris paleacea, and tussock grassland. Also of interest is the mud flow of the 1868 Earthquake that drapes the slopes southwest of Wood Valley. This area is designated as a candidate area for the Natural Area Reserves System (NARS).

Honu’apo: Impressive panoramic views of the Ka’ū coastline can be viewed from a high point along the Honu’apo pali. The Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park can be seen at a distance with Wood Valley’s cliff and valley formation in the foreground.

South Kona Coastline: The entire inshore waters from Kailua-Kona to South Point are said to have the best marine life in the entire State. It is a popular area for fishermen and skin divers.

South Point (Ka La’e): Exceptional wild shoreline that provides outstanding recreational opportunities for nature and scenic appreciation. Culturally, the site provides one of the longest and most complete records of human occupation in the Hawaiian Islands, beginning as early as 700 A.D. This area has cave shelters, burial grounds, fishing stations, heiau, salt pans, and the Pōhakuokea Stone which allegedly turns over each time a reign changes in the Islands.

Punalu'u – Miloli'i Wild Shoreline: This site is the longest wild shoreline in the State with archaeological remains, geologic and physiographic landmarks and several small sandy beaches – white sand, black sand, and green sand. Inshore waters off the coast are said to have the best marine life in the State. Portions of this site are designated candidate for NARS. Punalu'u is also the home for the threatened green sea turtle.

HCR 5 authorized State Parks to establish task force membership from landowners in south Kona and Ka'u with ten or more acres; small landowners in south Kona and Ka'u with acreage under ten acres; farmers in south Kona and Ka'u; community members with no affiliation to landowners with ten or more acres; DLNR; National Park Service; Department of Agriculture; United States (US) Fish and Wildlife Service; County of Hawai'i; private sector conservation organizations; and individuals or entities experienced in cultural resource protection.

There are a total of 34 members, representing the communities in the project area, land conservation organizations, representatives of a federal, state, or county government agency and individuals from the private sector. They are:

Richard Baker, Division Director, ILWU Hilo Office;
Pat Blew, Principal for the new Punalu'u Seamountain Resort ownership group that has a contract to buy the resort if they get the Special management Area permit they need to develop the property.
Darryl De Silva, lifetime resident of Okoe ahupua'a
Marge Elwell, a facilitator;
Guy Enriques, a fisherman;
Bill Gilmartin, Hawai'i Wildlife Fund;
Keolalani Hanoa, teacher of ahupua'a lifestyles, owns property in Punalu'u and near South Point, is affiliated with the Ka'u Preservation organization;
Pele Hanoa, member of the Hawai'i Island Burial Council;
Mary Helen Higgins, involved with Honomalino;
Tom Ishimaru, Hilo, a landowner with ten or more acres;
Gil Kahele, Pa'a Pono Miloli'i;
David and Jamie Kawauchi, residents of Ka'u;
Earl Louis, a Punalu'u resident; and is affiliated with the Ka'u Preservation organization
Chris Manfredi, a major land owner with more than ten acres;
Trinidad Marques, lifetime resident of Ka'u whose family made their living as fishermen;
Ed Olson, a major landowner with more than ten acres;
Ron Self, attorney, affiliated with the Ka'u Preservation Council;
Andy Shaw, manager of approximately 1,400 acres in Pāhala, near the Waipouli Bay Lookout;
Peter Simmons, West Hawai'i Coordinator, Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate; and
Vern Yamanaka, Land Manager for about 19,000 acres in the ahupua'a of Kahuku;
John Replogle, The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i;
Josh Stanbro, The Trust for Public Land;

Federal, State and County Agencies:

John Harrison, Environmental Coordinator, UH Environmental Center;
Frank Hays, Pacific Area Director, Pacific Islands Support Office, National Park Service;
Mary Lou Kobayashi, Office of Planning; Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism

Kai Markell for Clyde W. Namu'o, Administrator, Office of Hawaiian Affairs;
Charles Nahale and Lawrence Terlep, Enforcement Chief, Division of Conservation and
Resources Enforcement, DLNR;
Bob Nishimoto, Aquatic Biologist, Division of Aquatic Resources, DLNR;
*Daniel Quinn, Administrator, Division of State Parks, DLNR;
Gina Schulz, Acting Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Ecological Field Service
Office;
*Lauren Tanaka, Planner, Division of State Parks, DLNR; and
Chris Yuen, Director, County of Hawai'i Planning Department

(*Note: HCR 5 directed the Division of State Parks to establish the membership of the Task Force and thus has taken the lead with respect to the conduct of its activities.)

On October 27, 2005 and November 17, 2005, the Task Force met at the Pāhala Community Center. The purpose of the first meeting was to have the members introduce themselves and share their particular interests with respect to the objectives outlined in HCR 5. There was much discussion about defining the project area and although it was generally agreed that the project area include the coastal resources from Miloli'i to the southern boundary of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, there were concerns that what happens on lands makai of the highway influences the health of the mauka lands, that the visual quality of the vista that Ka'u offers should define the boundaries, and in looking at the resources that need protection, the Task Force should go mauka when its needed and not demarcate between makai and mauka lands. Other concerns were to be flexible so as not to exclude any issues or events that may occur outside the area boundaries (Minutes of the October 27, 2005 meeting are attached).

On behalf of the Task Force, DLNR sent a letter to Frank Hays, Pacific Area Director of the National Park Service (NPS) supporting the proposal by Congressman Ed Case that a reconnaissance survey of the Ka'u coastline be conducted by NPS to catalog and describe the important archaeological and historic sites and coastal resources, including endangered species to assess the suitability of having the area included as part of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park.

At the second meeting, Mr. Hays informed the Task Force that his Office would indeed perform the reconnaissance survey which would take approximately six months to complete and have two parts; 1. An evaluation of the significance of the resources, and 2. An assessment of the feasibility of the area's inclusion into the National Parks system, to include community support and verification of land status among other interest areas. A vote for the Task Force Chairperson was also held and Pele Hanoa was elected.

This is an interim report on the Task Force's activities and progress, as required under HCR 5. A final report that identifies the areas and resources that need protection and provides strategies for their preservation will be submitted before the end of the 2007 Legislative Session, which is also the date of the dissolution of the Task Force.